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Upper Big Hole Valley Near Wisdom

~Photo by Jennifer Boyer

Land Use Planning in the Big Hole Watershed, A Community Approach

~By Jennifer Boyer, Big Hole River Planning Group Director

Who and Why

Across the West, rural communities face many challenges. The small, isolated communities scattered along the famed Big Hole River, MT are also experiencing challenges. Changes in the economy and demographics are affecting land use patterns. In the Big Hole, traditional ranching and agriculture enterprises are suffering under a depressed agricultural economy. In order to survive, many landowners have turned to selling their land for recreation and residential uses and prices. While these changes are not inherently bad, the lack of planning and community input to shape the future of the Big Hole is cause for concern. To complicate matters, the Big Hole watershed has multiple jurisdictions in addition to many landowners and land managers, public and private. Within the watershed, there are four counties, all having unique and independent land use plans. Enter, the Big Hole Watershed Committee (BHCW) and Big Hole River

Foundation (BHRF). These local organizations responded to the need for coordinated land-use planning in the basin and have initiated a program (Big Hole River Planning Group) to address community concerns in a positive and proactive manner. The planning group steering committee is comprised of landowners and other local stakeholder interests. It is the objective of the Big Hole River Planning Group to develop a single plan for the watershed to be adopted by all associated counties and implemented by each county within the confines of the Big Hole watershed boundary. The mission of the Big Hole River Planning Group is: To coordinate land use planning, to conserve the agricultural, recreational and natural resource values and to respect private property and water rights, while recognizing the social and economic impacts of land-use changes in the Big Hole basin.

How-Funding-Process

The process began in the spring of 1999 with the formation of the Land-Use Planning Steering Committee. A small grant was secured from Resources for Community Collaboration to initiate the project. For the next two years the Planning Group focused on education, outreach and communication with the wider Big Hole community. The Planning Group received technical guidance from County Planners, County Commissioners, land trust experts, appraisers, real estate professionals and numerous others throughout the process. The Big Hole group also received financial support from the EPA Regional Geographic Initiative grant program and the Sonoran Institute.

Based on the community input at public meetings, through surveys and many

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conversations around kitchen tables from Wisdom to Twin Bridges, the Land Use group drafted a Big Hole Land-Use Plan in the spring of 2002. The plan was introduced through mailings, local press and a series of community meetings. The group found general support but it was apparent that the plan would require revisions. With guidance from planning departments and boards, a second draft was released in the fall of 2002, accompanied with public meetings and a response card to register support or opposition or comments.

Product

Nearly four years after the first steering committee meeting for the land-use planning project a final, resident-supported Big Hole Land-Use plan emerged. The Plan outlines four land-use planning strategies that are based on 15 goals and guiding principles, coming directly from the values of the residents.

Goals and Guiding Principles

RANCHING

1. Support family-based agriculture and ranching operations.
2. Conserve prime ag and ranch land.
3. Respect and maintain private property rights and water rights.

COMMUNITY

1. Maintain small-town character and rural atmosphere.
2. Enhance rural community vitality.
3. Promote a blended economy with new and old industries.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

1. Target future development around existing communities with good services.
2. Target future development along existing travel corridors and county road systems.
3. Target future development away from high-risk areas: forests, floodplain.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Maintain the character of Big Hole River and valley, river corridor and open space, large ranches, healthy ecosystem, wildlife habitat.
2. Protect the river corridor.
3. Maintain water and air quality.
4. Protect critical fish and wildlife habitat and winter range.
5. Maintain open space and viewsheds.
6. Maintain the quality of recreation experience with no development on the banks of the river.

LAND-USE PLANNING STRATEGIES

- 1) The right to farm proposal-The right to farm ordinance seeks to promote the rural character of the Big Hole Watershed and protect agricultural operations within the boundaries of this ordinance.
- 2) A recommendation to target future development-Future development should be targeted around existing communities with good services, along existing travel corridors and county road systems and away from high-risk areas such as forests and floodplains. Community infrastructure and development will be pursued to support local families and businesses.
- 3) A recommendation to establish a conservation easement program-To maintain family farms and

values, the agricultural heritage of the basin and open space, the residents support a program that will facilitate purchasing development rights from willing landowners interested in pursuing a conservation easement.

- 4) A recommendation to establish consistent river conservation standards-The river conservation standards establish a review for all development proposals within 500 feet of the mean high water mark of the Big Hole. A setback of 150 feet from the mean high water mark may be increased or decreased to meet 1) state and local sanitation and water quality requirements 2) floodplain boundaries, floodway functions and the riparian vegetative community.

Progress-Current Status

In January 2003, the group formally presented the plan to each of the four county planning boards. The Big Hole River Planning Group requested that the counties initiate the process to adopt the Big Hole Land-Use Plan as part of County Growth Policies to create consistent standards throughout the Big Hole River watershed. Glen rancher Randy Smith is a supporter of the land-use planning process. "I believe it is critically important to have local people direct planning," Smith said. "The plan strikes a good balance between landowner rights and guiding future development in this watershed."

Since that time, considerable progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations of the Big Hole Land-Use Plan. One county has fully adopted the plan into their Growth Policy. The other three counties have recommended the plan be adopted and advised the county commissioners to initiate the public hearing required prior to final adoption. The public hearings will be held this fall.

One exciting aspect of this project is that it calls for four-county cooperation. In order to ensure that consistent guidelines are in place for the Big Hole watershed, the four counties must coordinate their planning efforts. Specifically, the Big Hole plan recommends the same river conservation standards be implemented throughout the length of the river.

Wisdom rancher Ray Weaver commented, "the plan involved local citizens and took the concerns of landowners to heart. The plan is a good step towards conserving the Big Hole. We are helping the counties develop their growth policies by providing them recommendations."

For more information, please contact: **Jennifer Boyer** (406) 994-0251 jendwyer@montana.net or <http://www.bhrf.org>



Monitoring Water Quality

~Photo courtesy of NRCS

World Water Monitoring Day

~Contributed by Stacey Eriksen, EPA Region 8

To ensure that Americans and citizens around the globe have clean water for domestic, agricultural, commercial and recreational uses, EPA is partnering with America's Clean Water Foundation and the International Water Association to urge people around the world to test the quality of their streams, lakes, wetlands, and coastal waters. The first World Water Monitoring Day will be held Oct. 18, 2003.

EPA Assistant Administrator for Water, G. Tracy Mehan III, Roberta Savage, President of America's Clean Water Foundation, and Andrew Speers, representing the International Water Association, London, England, held a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. to announce the first World Water Monitoring Day and to talk about the importance of monitoring water quality by collecting and analyzing water samples and using adequate data to protect the world's water resources. "At this time we do not have sufficient information to provide a national answer to characterize the condition of waters and watersheds in the U. S.," said Mehan. "We risk flying blind if we aren't able to get dramatic improvements in water quality monitoring and data to support wise management decisions."

Roberta Savage, President of America's Clean Water Foundation said, "As the creator of National Water Monitoring Day, America's Clean Water Foundation was delighted by the participation of more than 75,000 Americans in 2002. Now in 2003 we have the opportunity to work with the International Water Association, the US Environmental Protection Agency and other federal partners, state and interstate agencies, watershed organizations and individuals throughout the world to promote personal stewardship and individual responsibility for the integrity of our world water. Our goal is to involve people throughout the world in this annual event and establish a baseline for evaluating water quality trends."

Andrew Speers, who represented the International Water Association, said, "World Water Monitoring Day is about raising awareness at the global level of the importance of water to us all and the quality of the environment in the local community. World Water Monitoring Day is a perfect example of thinking globally and acting locally."

Volunteers of all ages will perform four key tests to measure dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity/clarity and temperature. They can then enter their findings on the Web. Test kits may be ordered through America's Clean Water Foundation at

<http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org>

In 2002, the first National Water Monitoring Day was held to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act. More than 75,000 Americans participated in monitoring events and educational programs throughout the U.S. Additional information is available online at **<http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org>**

Five Star Restoration Program

~Judy Bailey, EPA HQ

When you were about eight years old, did you go down to the swamp behind your house at night and catch frogs and salamanders? Did you pick wildflowers at the edge of the marsh near your school? Would you like for your children and their children to have an opportunity like that to enjoy and learn from nature? That is exactly what the National Association of Counties, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Wildlife Habitat Council, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and EPA had in mind when they established the Five Star Restoration Program.

The Five Star Restoration Program brings together citizen groups, corporations, students, landowners, youth groups and local, state and federal government agencies to restore stream banks and wetlands across the country. It provides grants, technical support and information to help communities build strong partnerships to work together on restoration projects. Through education, outreach, training and some good old-fashioned hard work, communities learn to build diverse partnerships and foster local natural resource stewardship.

"Five Star partners demonstrate a strong commitment to the protection of our natural resources, and they can take pride in their projects that improve the health of wetland and river environments."

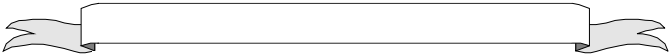
*~G. Tracy Mehan III
EPA Assistant Administrator for Water*

(Continued on page 4)

EPA Region 8 has been home to 23 Five Star projects since 1998. Five of the six states in the region have received grants. For example, the Montana Conservation Corps in Helena received a grant for its Ten Mile Creek revegetation project. Responding to 17 years' worth of bank erosion along Ten Mile Creek, the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) completed a bank revegetation project in just one summer in 1998. The young people who actually did the revegetating alongside numerous community volunteers were from its CorpsLink program. CorpsLink provides meaningful community service experiences for young people in residential facilities of the state's juvenile justice system—in this case Aspen Youth Alternatives. The CorpsLink members, supervised by members of the Montana Corps, and 40 residents and agency volunteers planted 1,700 shrubs and trees at three problem areas along the creek bank. A local scout troop and youth from the Helena Youth Council added to the ranks of workers.

Just last year the Colorado State University Environmental Learning Center (ELC) received a Five Star Grant for a restoration project on the Poudre River, removing invasive salt cedar and Russian olive and planting native trees and shrubs along approximately two miles of the Poudre River corridor. Youth from the Larimer County Department of Human Services, Turning Point for Youth and the ELC worked side by side with natural resource professionals to learn about invasive species ecology and habitat monitoring techniques. This project is part of a larger regional effort to enhance and maintain over 30 miles of degraded river corridor. Larfarge North America, Inc., is providing funding for interpretive signage educating residents about wetland reclamation, water quality and invasive species. The City of Fort Collins is providing technical assistance for the project and trees. Water and People, a local non-governmental organization, is contributing seedlings and technical assistance.

This year nearly \$600,000 was awarded to 56 community conservation projects throughout the country. The winning projects were selected from a competitive pool of nearly 200 applicants. Awards are based on the program's educational and training opportunities for students and at-risk youth, the



***“All the rivers flow into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full.
To the place where the rivers flow,
There they flow again.”***

~Ecclesiastes 1:7



ecological benefits to be gained and the project's benefits to the community.

G. Tracy Mehan III, EPA Assistant Administrator for Water said when this year's awards were announced, “EPA is a proud supporter of the Five Star Restoration program, which provides excellent opportunities for environmental education and habitat restoration in communities around the nation. Five Star partners demonstrate a strong commitment to the protection of our natural resources, and they can take pride in their projects that improve the health of wetland and river environments.”

The Five Star Program is funded primarily by the Wetlands Division in EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Community-Based Restoration Program.

For more information on the Five Star Program see EPA's River Corridor and Wetlands Restoration web site at

[http:// www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/5star](http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/5star) or call the EPA Wetlands Information Helpline at 1-800-566-1382.

Consolidated Funding Process

~Pam Dougherty, EPA Region 8

On **October 1st**, 2003 the fiscal year (FY) 2004 Request for Proposals (RFP) under EPA's Region 8 Ecosystems Protection Program (EPP) and Water Program (WP) “Consolidated Funding Process” will be released. This funding process allows you to make one proposal submission to be considered for multiple sources under four different Clean Water Act section 104(b)3 programs including Regional Geographic Initiative, Wetlands, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) water quality, and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). To be considered for FY2004 funding we must receive a hard copy and CD of your proposal(s) **in our office by close-of-business December 5, 2003.**

The RFP, guidance, program criteria, and additional information such as updates, process schedule, and program-specific guidance will be available at the following website beginning October 1, 2003:

<http://www.epa.gov/region08/cfp> Any initial questions should be directed to Pam Dougherty, Program Coordinator, at dougherty.pam@epa.gov

Colorado Watershed Assembly and Colorado Watershed Protection Fund

~Marc Alston, EPA Region 8

The Colorado Watershed Assembly (CWA) held its fourth annual conference in Glenwood Springs on September 11-12. Over 90 attendees displayed intense interest in both networking with the diverse attendees, and the numerous technical sessions on a wide range of topics. Program

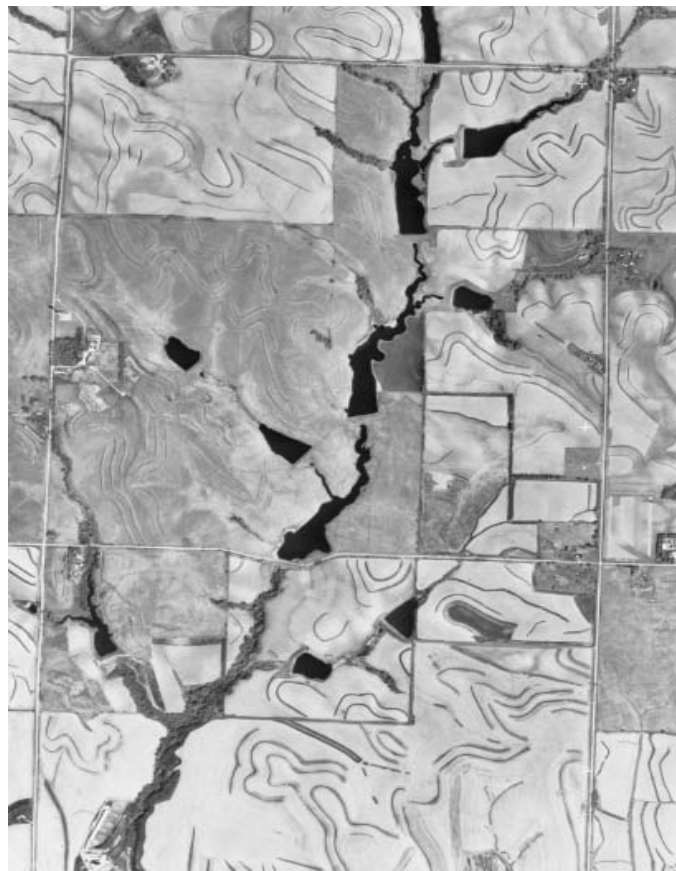
highlights included a keynote address on Colorado Water Policy by Greg Walcher, CO Department of Natural Resources Director; and Melinda Kassen of Trout Unlimited, who offered an environmental group perspective on Colorado Water Policy. Max Dodson, Region 8 Assistant Regional Administrator, presented an EPA Region 8 External Group Award to the coalition that developed, achieved legislative passage of, and is implementing the Colorado Watershed Protection Fund (CWPF). The Fund gives CO taxpayers the option of donating income tax refunds to meet watershed group needs. Award recipients included representatives of the Colorado Watershed Assembly, CO Watershed Network, CO Water Quality Control Commission, CO Water Conservation Board, and legislative sponsors. EPA continued in strong support of CWA activities, as Marc Alston served as Conference Program Chair for the second consecutive year. Additionally, CWPF first-year awardees were announced concurrently with the Conference. Those receiving funds were: Big Thompson Watershed Forum, Coalition for the Upper South Platte, Eagle River Watershed Council, James Creek Watershed Initiative, North Fork River Improvement Association, and Roaring Fork Conservancy.

Montana Watershed Symposium

~Contributed by Peter Ismert, EPA Region 8

Community leaders, natural resource professionals, economists, politicians, authors and landowners from across Montana and the West will be sponsoring the second Montana Watershed Symposium on December 8-9 in Great Falls, MT. The Symposium is being expanded to include participants from other western states. This is an opportunity for local citizens, ranchers, policy makers, resource managers, consultants and scientists from around the western states to learn from one another and discuss opportunities for our communities and landscapes.

Guest speakers will provide inspirational stories about community collaboration and developing local solutions. Recognized scientists will present the principles of watershed science and local citizens will share their stories on successful conservation efforts and local decision making. If you are concerned about the future of your community or local watershed, you should attend this Symposium. If you are interested in locally-driven community projects and conservation efforts you will benefit from this event. If you don't know what a watershed is, you are invited to learn about how watersheds affect your life. If you are seeking opportunities to; improve natural resources, the economy and livelihoods, you will find resources, networks and information at the Symposium. For Symposium details, potential travel scholarship information, and registration please contact the Montana Watercourse at (406) 994-6671 or mtwatercourse@montana.edu



An aerial photo used for conservation planning from the NRCS shows conservation practices already in place. Terracing of slopes is visible in the picture. This practice, also known as contour stripcropping, is among the best practices that protects the soil from erosion and keeps sediment and chemicals from adjacent rivers and lakes.

Aerial photos are just one of the 'new' technologies used to protect watersheds. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), water quality modeling, satellite photography, and thermal imaging are all technologies that are incorporated into the processes of land use planning and watershed protection.

~Photo courtesy of NRCS

Web Resources

~Contributed by: Darcy Campbell, Roger Dean, Mitra Jha, Brad Crowder, Marc Alston, Stacey Eriksen

The Digital Library for Earth System Education (DLESE) is a four-year-old National Science Foundation effort involving teachers, students and scientists working together to create a digital library of educational resources and services to support Earth system science education at all levels. Resources include electronic resources such as outreach materials, lesson plans, maps, images, data sets, visualizations, curricula, and much more. Sources include

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Federal agencies such as NASA, USGS, and EPA, universities, non-profits, etc. This is a GREAT resource to know about! Check it out at <http://www.dlese.org> Part of the library is the DWEL collection (Digital Water Education Library) that has been developed at the Center for Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education (CSMATE) at Colorado State University. DWEL is being developed by practicing K-12 and informal educators. This collection contains many of the best water resources related to watersheds, ground water, wetlands, and other water topics. Part of this collection can currently be accessed through the DLESE website and by early 2004, there will be over 500 "exemplary" water-related resources in this collection. If you would like to learn more about the DWEL collection, review or suggest a great water resource for the collection, or use resources from DWEL in your classroom please contact **Bryan Aivazian** bryana@trib.com or **Ed Geary** egeary@csmate.colostate.edu DWEL is also funded in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

The National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals, in collaboration with the Trust for Public Land and ERG, has released "**Smart Growth for Clean Water: Helping Communities Address the Water Quality Impacts of Sprawl.**" The report includes a "Top 10" list of actions that local governments can take to promote smart growth for clean water. <http://www.nalgep.org/publications/PublicationsDetail.cfm?LinkAdvID=42157>

Canadian web site from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration on a new approach to tackling water quality problems http://www.agr.gc.ca/pfra/flash/robocow/en/robocow_e.htm

Riparian and wetlands issues/restoration for the Great Basin and Intermountain West can be found at: Click on Riparian/Wetland Project
<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/idpmc/>

Bioengineering practices compiled by the San Dimas Technology and Development Center of the US Forest Service
http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/php/library_card.php?p_num=FS-683P

The NCSU Stream Restoration Guidebook is intended as a reference for professionals who plan, design, review, and implement stream restoration projects. It is available at http://www.bae.ncsu.edu/programs/extension/wqg/sri/stream_rest_guidebook/sr_guidebook.pdf

Physician On-Line Reference Guide to Recognizing Waterborne Disease and the Health Effects of Water Pollution. Through a grant, US EPA's Water Protection Task Force is supporting a website to help healthcare providers recognize and manage waterborne disease and the health effects of water pollution resulting from both natural and intentional contamination of water. A new chapter -- a repository of physician anti-terrorism preparedness resources -- was recently added. The grant also provides for outreach and

training on the website for medical practitioners. Check it out! <http://www.waterhealthconnection.org>

Watershed Solutions: Collaborative Problem Solving for States and Communities

In July 2002, NPCC hosted a colloquium for people involved in watershed collaborations, academics, and other experts from government and non-profit organizations. Its aim was to identify lessons learned from successful watershed initiatives, and to develop recommendations for governors and other state officials on ways to enhance the use and effectiveness of watershed partnerships. This report is an outgrowth of that colloquium.

Building Trust: When Knowledge from "Here" Meets Knowledge from "Away" Peter Adler of The Keystone Center and Juliana Birkhoff of RESOLVE authored this 15-page guide, which describes 20 ways environmental stakeholder groups can talk more effectively with one other. A valuable resource for both facilitators and environmentalists.

http://www.policyconsensus.org/pubs/npcc_pubs.html

Protecting mountain tributaries and high-elevation lakes One of every two people on earth quenches their thirst with water that originates in mountains. All of the major rivers of the world depend on mountains for water. One key aspect of protecting these critical mountain ecosystems is protecting high-elevation lakes. See fact sheet on water and mountains:

<http://www.mountains2002.org/files/pdf/factsheets/water-e.pdf>

Article on high-elevation lakes and persistent organic pollutants from Environment Canada:

http://www.ec.gc.ca/science/sandenov00/article1_e.html

Eight key recommendations to prevent the introduction, establishment and spread of invasive species

The Non-Native Species Policy Review Working Group in the United Kingdom has come up with key recommendations for a three-stage approach to preventing invasive species that are applicable to almost any country:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/resprog/findings/non-native/execsummary.pdf>

An additional report reviews and analyses international agreements on invasive species and looks at invasive species legislation in the United States, New Zealand, Germany and Italy. This report also outlines very useful recommendations:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/resprog/findings/non-native/ecoscope-intro.pdf>

Waterbird Population Estimates - Third Edition is now available for downloading. This Wetlands International publication identifies 2,271 biogeographical populations of 868 waterbird species occurring throughout the world. It estimates the size of the populations and estimates population trends (whether declining, stable or increasing). Bookmarks in the PDF files make it easy to find a particular

species you may be looking for, and distribution maps for each species are provided. Any lake regularly supporting 1% or more of a waterbird biogeographical population qualifies as a Wetland of International Importance: this book will let you know if you are eligible to apply for Ramsar site status on the basis of the birds that visit or breed near your lake.

<http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/WPEnote.htm>

On-line basic primer on "Understanding Lake Ecology"

This resource was prepared by the "Water on the Web" program in Minnesota and can be found at:

<http://wow.nrri.umn.edu/wow/under/primer/index.html>

Updated catalog of U.S. federal funding for watershed protection now online. EPA's new very user-friendly database has information on 84 different sources of federal funding for watershed-related projects.

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/fedfund/>

Water use efficiency including water-efficient landscaping, water conservation, and using water wisely in the home.

<http://www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/index.htm>

EPA'S draft report on the environment.

<http://www.epa.gov/indicators/roe/html/roeTOC.htm>

U.S. nationwide fish community data online.

Data on fish communities are now available for 960 stream sites in more than 50 major river basins across the U.S. USGS fish community samples document the presence of all fish species and their relative abundances within designated stream reaches. <http://infotrek.er.usgs.gov/>

Go Green at Office Meetings, Presentations, and Conferences

~Contributed by Kim Bartels, EPA Region 8

- ◆ Instead of overheads, use electronic presentations.
- ◆ Distribute proceedings and presentations electronically on CD-ROM, diskette, or the Internet.
- ◆ If you need hard copies of overheads developed with presentation software, print multiple slides to a page.
- ◆ Encourage people to bring their own reusable coffee mugs and cups to the event. Some eateries offer discounts for bringing your own mug or cup for a refill.
- ◆ Advertise meetings electronically through e-mail or send a group voice mail.
- ◆ Teleconference when possible, rather than traveling to meetings.
- ◆ Use public transportation or your bicycle to go to local meetings rather than driving. Carpool or use public

transportation when traveling out of town.

- ◆ Reuse name badge holders from previous conferences.
- ◆ Encourage registration by e-mail instead of fax or mail.
- ◆ Make sure recycling bins are available.
- ◆ Serve food that has minimal packaging. For example, buffet style has less packaging waste than box lunches. Pitchers of soft drinks and water are better than individual cans and bottles.
- ◆ When traveling, let the hotel know that you don't want bed sheets and towels changed every day. Ask if the hotel recycles newspapers and cans, and recycle yours. Turn off lights and heat/air conditioning when not in your room.

For more ideas on planning environmentally aware events, look at EPA's booklet titled, "It's Easy Being Green! A Guide To Planning And Conducting Environmentally Aware Meetings And Events." It is publication number EPA530-K-96-002 and can be accessed on the web site <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/grn-mtg/index.htm>

Go Green When Purchasing Supplies and Products

~Contributed by Kim Bartels, EPA Region 8

ENERGY STAR® - Appliances and office equipment that meet the federal standard for energy efficiency will have an ENERGY STAR® label. Look for it, ask for it!

Recycled Content Products - These products are made with waste materials and by-products that have been recovered from the solid-waste stream. A recycled content product may contain post-consumer material or pre-consumer material, or a combination of the two. Buy products with the highest percentage of post-consumer material.

"Men may dam it and say that they have made a lake, but it will still be a river. It will keep its nature and bide its time, like a caged wild animal alert for the slightest opening. In time it will have its way; the dam, like the ancient cliffs, will be carried away piecemeal in the currents."

~Wendell Berry



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Natural News

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If you have an article concerning ecosystem protection, community based environmental protection, or watersheds; we would like to hear from you!

We need your help in updating our mailing list in order to keep Natural News coming to you! Please contact John DiPentino at (303) 312-6594 or dipentino.john@epa.gov, or write to him at the return address below.

Conserve our natural resources, please share your copy with a friend or recycle.

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Ecosystem Stewardship on the web: http://www.epa.gov/region8/community_resources/steward/est.html



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